

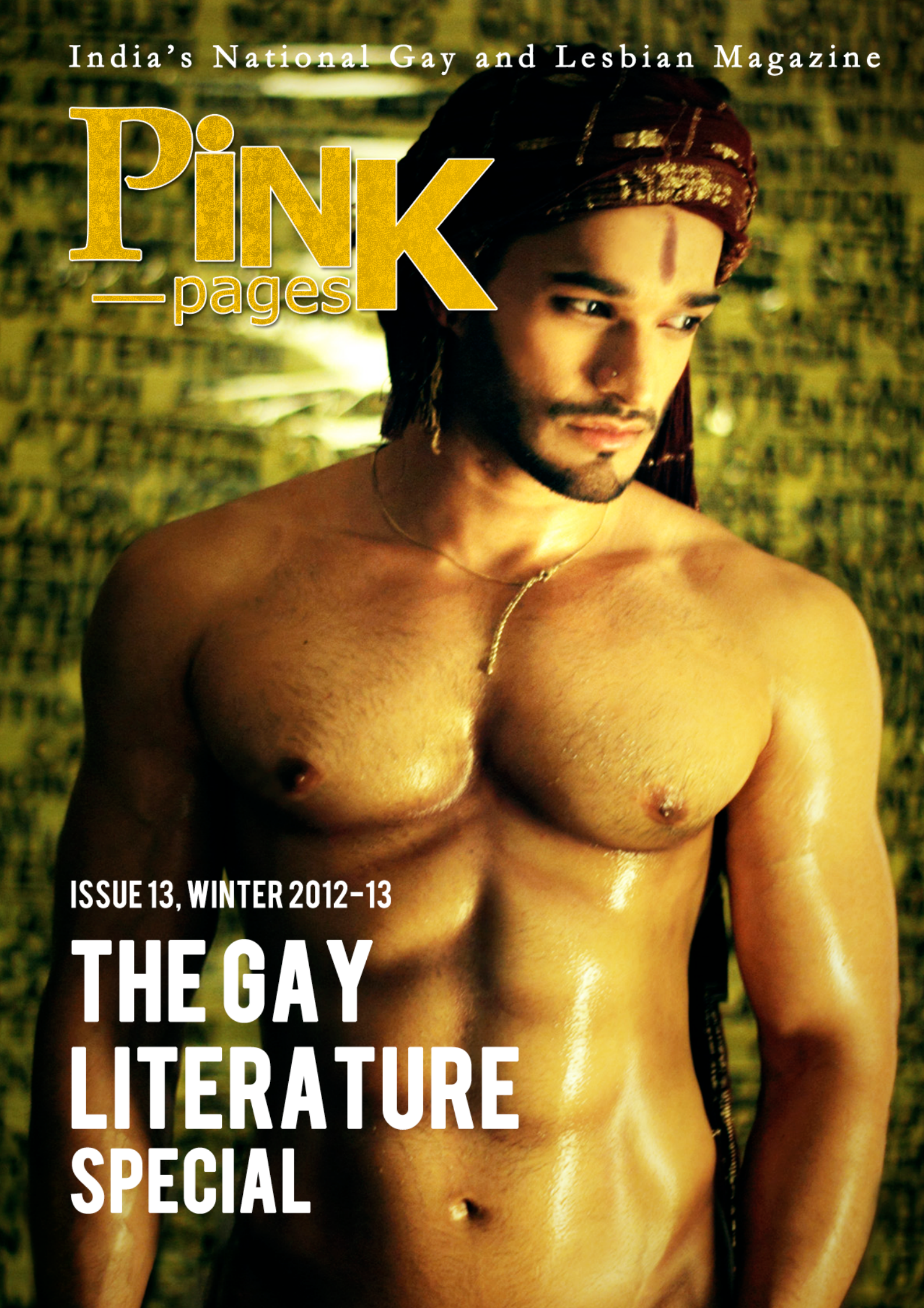
India's National Gay and Lesbian Magazine

PiNK

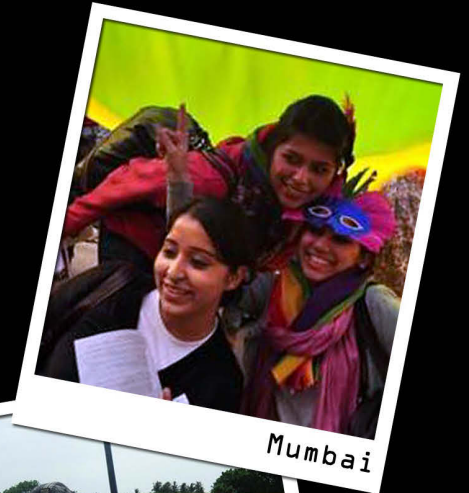
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ISSUE 13, WINTER 2012-13

THE GAY LITERATURE SPECIAL



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Editor:

Udayan Dhar, Mumbai

Creative Director:

Gaurav, Bhopal

Designers:

Yadhu Govindakrishna, Tiruvananthapuram
Ratnesh Malviya, Mumbai

Contributors:

Sandeep, Mumbai
Vikram Kolmannskog, Oslo
Imtiaz Akhtar, Kolkata
Elancharan Gunasekaran, Singapore
Aser Peleg, Bangkok
Rohit K Dasgupta, London

Cover Model:

Shazad Hai, Photo by Waseem Shaikh

A man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a white button-down shirt, is looking upwards with his head tilted back. The background is a simple room with a white wall and a patterned curtain. Overlaid on the image is large, bold, red text that reads "COME LETS F@!!L!".

COME LETS F@!!L!

FAIL THE HIV TEST, USE A CONDOM.



A Public Health Campaign By Mission for Indian Gay & Lesbian Empowerment .www.Mingle.org.in

PiNK —pages

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VESUVIUS
CAFE

VESUVIUS
CAFE

Editor's Letter

Frankly, I'm not very fond of the term "gay literature". The only literature that interests me is good literature. And that's exactly what I told a journalist from *The Hindu* when she asked my opinion on another recently related work of "queer" literature (Another atrocious word- that one!). Alan Hollinghurst won the Booker for writing a great story with stunning narration. Back home, Siddharth Sanghvi wrote two eminently readable novels with powerful gay characters without anyone ever labeling him a "gay writer". And that's what upcoming gay and lesbian writers in India need to focus on- writing good literature, rather than just gay literature. Keeping that in mind, our focus for the second gay literature issue was entirely on quality- rather than quantity.



Before we released the first literature issue a year back, we were jittery about the response such an issue would get. But the positive reviews we got helped us set the pace for the second such issue as well! The response of our readers surely points to the great need for more writing exploring gay and lesbian themes in the Indian context. This issue is just another attempt to shift the focus on some of our upcoming and talented writers.

For the current issue, we received several dozen entries- and the short listing process was taxing. We'd have loved to keep many of the articles we received, but our focus was on a lean and thoroughly engaging issue. Only the ones absolutely outstanding in their quality of work have made it to the final list. To those whose contributions have not been selected- do not lose heart. Your work was fascinating enough to make our job of selecting the final few a really tough one! Finally, wishing you all happy reading- we would love to hear your comments and feedback on this issue!

Udayan Dhar
Editor in Chief

(Letters to the editor can be sent to editor@pink-pages.co.in)



Cover Model:

Shazad Hai



Shazad Hai works at the Alliance for South Asians AIDS Prevention (ASAAP) in Toronto where he coordinates HIV/AIDS outreach and prevention based programming for self-identified South Asian queer men and is the lead on the “Colour Me Queer” project. He facilitates ‘Dosti’ – a social support space for South Asian men and runs the group’s well-established online presence. Shazad is a member of the Ontario Gay Men’s Provincial Advisory Body and participates on the Gay Men’s Sexual Health Summit Planning Committee. Shazad is also a founding member of ‘Rangeela’ a quarterly event for queer identified South Asians, profits of which are donated to various local and international non-profits.

My fitness mantra

To remember that your journey to your fitness goals is unique and your own, so no need to rush or constantly compare

yourself to others; you’ll find your results will come a lot quicker because you’ll figure out what works for you.

Outfit that makes me sizzle

My own skin.

The ultimate style icon

Madhuri Dixit!

What keeps me busy on a lazy weekend..

Eating, and sleeping...

A cause I stand up for

I am a strong advocate for HIV/AIDS and sexual health education and rights for PHAs (People living with HIV/AIDS). In the context of queer rights, I think it’s important to create community so people can foster a feeling of comfort, belonging and family.

To me, love means..

To enjoy and appreciate the company of another while being content with who you are

HYDERABAD'S MAGICAL WRITER

by Ratnesh Malviya



The Magical Palace, Kunal Mukherjee's debut novel is a coming-of-age story of a gay boy, Rahul, born and brought up in Hyderabad. It's about his struggles, the many hurdles he has to face to find and heal himself, it is about the human experience of growing up different, regardless of the background, race or nationality.

Kunal Mukherjee is a San-Francisco based Indian origin poet and writer. His work has found its place in India Currents and Hot Flashes: sexy little stories and poems. His first novel may soon be a remade into a film. Kunal is working on his second novel- about a motley bunch of characters settled in Delhi. Kunal talks to Ratnesh about his book and what he thinks about the future of Indian gay literature.

Do tell us that the story is true. If not completely, we believe most part of it. The Mint House? Colonel uncle and Claudio?

Thank you. It is immensely gratifying to know that readers believe most of My Magical Palace to be a true story.

The novel is indeed a work of fiction which started as an assignment given to us as part of a writing class I took a few years ago. We were asked to write an essay about the universal experience of loss and about a place that we could never go back to. So I wrote about Mint House, an old Nizam palace in Hyderabad that I grew up in, that I can never ever go back to. And when my teacher urged me to write a novel based on that essay, I balked at the idea. It was too overwhelming a project and too emotionally charged. But then over time I did write a novel and added several threads and plot lines that are all purely fictional. Of course one cannot write about anything that one has not experienced at least as hearsay if not in person. So the time and place characterized by Mint House, Hyderabad, Rajesh Khanna are all real. The characters and situations are fictional and the life of the protagonist Rahul Chatterjee is just my projection of a particular character's situation and experiences.

Colonel Uncle's character is based on a family friend who was a "confirmed bachelor" that everyone felt sorry for since he had no wife or children, but who was

incredibly interesting and always traveling to new places and doing fascinating things. He never visited with a family in tow, and was eternally youthful and vibrant. That is the avuncular presence that Colonel Uncle brings to the novel. He is charming, superbly dressed and a strong advocate for justice and protector of animals and the adolescent Rahul too, when the establishment turns against him. Claudio is the "friend" that he will go to live with, when Claudio's wife passes way. The presence of Colonel Uncle as a role model for Rahul is what gives him the biggest breakthrough in accepting and loving himself, as an adult, years after they bid each other goodbye.

Having said that, all the characters and situations were created with the purpose that the reader can relate to the dilemmas and challenges we all face as humans. And ultimately if readers can say "I know what that feels like", I will have accomplished my goal, which is to bring relatedness which transcends our differences of gender, sexuality, or religion. When all is said and done, what we want the most is to love and be loved.

It is the threat of losing the love of his life, that forces Rahul to face his past and come to terms with who he is.

We know Rajesh Khanna never looked fine as he did in 'Anand'. Which are your favorite songs in his movies?

Yes, I do think that Rajesh Khanna in Anand was hauntingly handsome and his character and songs were mesmerizing. The heartbreaking end stays with me still. My favourite songs are “Zindagi Kaisi Hai Paheli” by Manna Dey and “Kahin Door Jab Din Dhal Jaaye” by Mukesh.

What were your last farewell words for him?

Thank you for being the brilliant and charismatic actor who coloured my dreams and heightened my self-awareness growing up. Even though I never met you, you were personal and real to me. I would not have it any other way. RIP.

When Rajesh Khanna died, it was devastating. The death of my childhood hero and object of adoration marked the ending of my childhood, as an adult. I know this might sound strange, but that is how I experienced it.

Who are your favourite gay writers?

Among writers from earlier centuries I love Oscar Wilde and E.M. Forster. Among contemporary writers I admire Hoshang Merchant of course, and Vikram Seth, Rita Mae Brown, David Sedaris and Alice Walker whose books are rich beyond measure.

How do you see gay literature evolving in India in the coming years?

In the past few years there has been a notable increase in visibility of gay and lesbian writing in India. The platform for publishing gay lesbian related writing has evolved and mainstream publishers are now publishing books on gay, lesbian and transgender related themes. Harper Collins (India) published My Magical Palace for instance and other major publishers are doing the same.

The US Consulate in Mumbai and Queer Ink held a reading and discussion of My Magical Palace in October of 2012. This is an indication of the level of interest and recognition of gay literature in India today and there will be more.

There is news about your second novel on the way about motley bunch of characters settled in Delhi, do tell us more about it.

My second book is actually based in Bollywood and San Francisco. It has an unlikely bunch of motley characters thrown together and their lives get entwined inexorably, creating unimaginable crises, resulting in unexpected danger and drama. I am also working on a screenplay for a film adaptation of My Magical Palace which when made, will be historic in its depiction of the themes, situations and characters.



SHORT FICTION:
ENGAGEMENT

By Vikram Kolmannskog

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING.

We see an ad about ADI with facial photo, personal data on weight, age etc. on shaadi.com. We hear Temple bells from afar. Then we see the reflection of Adi's actual face on the computer screen, a beautiful boy in his early twenties.

ADI [OFF]: Ma, you're lying!

Adi sits next to a table with a laptop. Red evening sun shines in through a window. MA enters with fresh gujiya.

MA: What are you saying about your own mother! Have you no shame!

Adi gets up and walks towards Ma with a smile, takes a gujiya and puts it quickly in his mouth before putting an arm around her.

ADI: 185 cm, ma?

He stands on his toes.

MA: Yes, beta. Just continue with the yoga and you'll get there.

ADI: I'm not really wheat coloured either. What about writing mud colour; can't that be a bit sexy? Or brown like Cadbury milk chocolate? Who wants wheat?

Ma hits him lightly on the chest.

MA: Stop fooling around! On the profile picture you're wheat coloured. You just have to stay out of the sun. Don't be so difficult. Amir's mother found him a bride on shaadi dot com in one two

three. He's not 185 cm and wheat coloured. I don't even know if he likes, well, you know.

ADI (shocked): What?

MA: Adi. You know what they say about him?

(Silence)

I know that you're close friends, and I see his mother as a sister. But Muslim boys and men are a little different from us, you know. Amir already has a bad name here, and for good reasons I think. If you spend too much time with him, it may rub off.

ADI: Or maybe he'll get a better name from being with me. I'm going out for while now, Ma.

MA: Out now? You just got home, and the Holi celebrations are about to begin.

ADI: I'll be back soon.

MA: Where are you going? People...

ADI: People people people. What do you think people are saying about you?

MA: Adi! I've only done my best to take care of you and give you a good upbringing. Your father... What could I have done?

She sits down at the table and seems to be on the brink of crying. Adi hesitates for a moment, but then walks over and places a hand, reluctantly, on her shoulder.

ADI: Let's not talk about him again. I just mean that people say all kinds of things about all kinds of people in this town.

MA: They'll see. Soon you will be well married. Then you can live here and take care of your old mother. Adi pulls back his hand as if he suddenly burnt himself on his mother's words.

ADI: You're 40 years, Ma. You're not old. And I'm 23. Old enough. I actually can't believe that you made a profile about me on shaadi dot com. Did you think I would be happily surprised? I won't accept this. I'm not going to move back here. I'll stay in the city after I finish my exams.

MA: I thought this was something we could do together, Adi. Of course you can change the profile as you want. Change the cm and the wheat.
(Silence)

Just delete the whole thing! Don't worry about me! I can live and die here alone!

ADI: I'm going out now, Ma. I'll see you later.

Adi exits. Ma remains at the table and comforts herself by eating a gujiya.

EXT. RIVERSIDE - DUSK.

Adi lies with his head on AMIR's lap. Amir is in the middle of his twenties. He leans towards a Palash tree in full bloom. Chirping can be heard from all the birds that are settling for the night. Some red flowers fall down on the boys. Adi wets a finger, takes some soil on it and draws a line on Amir's forehead.

AMIR: Blessing me, jaanejaan?

ADI: Would you accept my blessing?

Amir wets a finger, takes some soil on it and draws a line on Adi's forehead. He continues making a dot on his nose.

AMIR: (reciting from Haqiqat al-Fuqara)

"So Madho, too, was playing Holi on Basant, handsome and graceful, winsome and coy, Playing with everyone, immersing himself in frolic, teasing everyone and dallying seductively, He strode up to Hussayn very shyly and threw colours over his head and his shoulders And as he poured colours over his hair and clothes he sang and his body arched in a dance before him."

ADI: Vah, vah! You and your Sufis.

Amir carefully draws around Adi's lips.

AMIR: *"Hussayn, in his longing, took on a lively air - his feet suddenly nimble, his steps answered Madho's dance. To his haughty grace Hussayn's every gesture implored and Madho himself became Hussayn's game of Basant."*

Adi has closed his eyes. They remain in silence for a little while. It darkens quickly. Amir looks at Adi and shakes him.

AMIR: Adi, Adi!

ADI: What? What's wrong?

AMIR: You were sleeping.

ADI: Yes. And why not let me sleep a little, idiot?

AMIR: I don't know. I was suddenly afraid. Suddenly, I felt so alone.

Adi stands up and looks out over the river. He can glimpse the full moon.

ADI: I was dreaming.

AMIR: What did you dream?

ADI: I don't know.

(Silence)

I have to call Ma.

He takes a mobile phone out of his pocket and dials her number.

ADI: Hi, Ma. I just wanted to say sorry.

I know that I've just arrived, and I know that you only meant well. I'll be home soon, and we can go to the bonfire together.

(Silence)

Yes, sorry.

(Silence, looks at Amir and rolls his eyes)

Yes, I have no shame.

(Silence, caresses Amir's hair)

Right now? Right now I am by the river.

(Silence, pulls his hand away from Amir and walks over to the river)

Yes, I'm with Amir.

(Silence)

Ma. I'll see you later.

(Hangs up)

Amir gets up and walks over to Adi who stands with his back to him.

AMIR: Anything wrong?

(Silence)

Adi-jaan, what is it?

Amir places a hand on his shoulder. Adi pushes it away and turns around so they stand face to face.

ADI: When were you thinking of telling me?

Amir: I thought you'd be happy.

ADI: Of course. Congratulations, Amir!

Amir: She's lesbian, Adi.

ADI: What do you mean?

Amir: We've made a deal. She knows about you. She also has someone else.

ADI: And you think no one will find out?

Amir: People don't care so much as long as you're married.

ADI: Does your mother know?

Amir: I think so. I think she's happy as long as I get married. Why aren't you happy, Adi? We can continue.

Adi turns around and sits down by the river. Amir shakes his head, walks over to the tree, breaks off a thin branch. Some birds fly out of the tree. Adi gets back up and turns towards him.

ADI: I don't know if I want to be your someone else.

Amir: So how the hell were you thinking of doing this, Adi?

ADI: We could have refused, Amir. You could have come to the city. We could have lived there. The two of us.

Amir walks towards Adi.

Amir: "We could have lived there. The two of us." Which country are you living in?

Adi: The country where the anti-gay legislation that the British introduced has been rejected by our courts. The country where there are several cases of same-sex Hindu marriages. I just read in the paper about two girls who got married...

Amir: And soon after committed suicide Adi!

Adi: Relax! I have no plans of dying in order to be with you, Amir!

Amir:

(recites Mir Taqi "Mir")
"God having given these boys such beautiful faces Should have given them a bit of compassion too."

Adi: Don't you have any words of your own, Amir? Is everything an act?

Amir takes hold of Adi's shoulder. Adi tears himself loose. They struggle with each other, and Adi falls in the river with a SPLASH.

EXT. UNDERWATER SCENE -
MOONLIT NIGHT.

Black. We only hear the sounds of a dolphin. Then we see an unfocused close-up of the dolphin. The image becomes clearer. Adi is hovering in the water while watching the dolphin. The dolphin swims up and disappears in the

light from the moon that shines through the water. Dolphin sound changes to flute tune. In the light we can glimpse KRISHNA slowly descending. Krishna is dark, almost blue. He is wearing a golden dhoti, and the bare chest is covered with a flower garland. He has a beautiful face and flowing hair with a peacock feather attached.

Krishna reaches Adi and places his mouth on Adi's mouth. Maybe giving air, maybe a kiss. Adi exhales and bubbles form in the water. It repeats itself. Adi looks around. Some FIGURES appear out of the bubbles in the blue water. They dance around them. Young and old, women and men, men dressed as women, women dressed as men, Amir, Adi's mother - all appear and disappear in the round dance. When we again see Adi, it is no longer Krishna but Amir who has grasped hold of him and swims towards the surface. They break the surface and gasp for air. Palash flowers are floating all around them.

EXT. SQUARE - MIDNIGHT

Men, women and children are gathered around a bonfire on the square. Some people walk around the fire sacrificing wheat and oats while chanting religious verses. Amir, who has changed clothes, is standing with Amir's mother further

away from the bonfire. Adi, who has also changed his clothes, comes up to them.

Adi: Salaam, auntie.

Amir's mother: Namaste, beta.

(Silence, looks around)

Where's your mother?

Adi: She wasn't feeling well.

Amir's mother: How sad, especially now during Holi! Nothing serious I hope?

Adi: It'll pass.

Hijras come up to them, dancing and singing. Amir's mother quickly hands them some money and turns her attention to Adi and Amir.

Amir's mother: You've heard that we have a bride for Amir?

Adi: Yes.

Amir's little brother, a boy in his late teens, comes up to them. He shakes hands with Adi, but remains quiet.

Amir's mother: I'm sure you'll find someone soon as well. You've started looking, right?

Adi: I've already found someone.

Amir's mother: Oh? I can't believe your mother hasn't said anything. Who's the lucky girl? Is it someone you're studying with? Is it through shaadi dot com? Have you set a date?

Adi: It's a boy. A very unlucky, Muslim boy.

Amir's mother: You must be about to finish university now soon? Your mother misses you so much. It'll be good for her to have you back here and married, beta.

Adi looks at Amir.

Amir: Ammi, I've changed my mind.

Amir's mother: No, beta. No.

(Silence, places her hands on her head)

I don't seem to feel very well either.

Maybe it's something in the air. I want to go home now.

Amir's little brother: I'll take you, Ammi.

Amir: I'll stay here with Adi.

Amir's little brother nods. Amir's mother looks terrified at Amir before she sends Adi a poisonous look, turns around and walks away.

There is quite a crowd around the bonfire now. Adi and Amir smile at each other. Adi takes Amir's hand. They walk around the fire together.

CLOSE-UP OF THE FIRE, ONLY FIRE AND ITS SOUND

Vikram Kolmannskog is a writer, psychotherapist and human rights lawyer. He is of Indian and Norwegian origin and currently lives in Oslo, Norway. The Sufi poems recited are based on translations in Vanita, R. and Kidwai, S. (2000) Same-Sex Love in India. St. Martin's Press: New York



Short Fiction:

My Best Friend

By Sandeep

I sit at the counter of my father's book shop staring vacantly at passersby. It's only six, three more hours to go before we close for the day. Dad and bro have gone to meet the parents of the girl my bro is going to marry next month. It's been such a long struggle finding another match for bro. His first marriage was a disaster, dissolving within four months. They wanted him to sell our bookshop and invest the proceeds in their garment business. Those loud fights and the humiliation he suffered all those months took a toll on his health. He is a gentle creature who hates even a raised voice. I seem to have got his traits, except that those have been multiplied manifold in my genes. I can't stand arguments, I can't stand loud music, and I can't stand boisterous games. I seem to have carved myself right out of a friend circle because of my shyness.

At 24 I have a grand total of two friends – my bro and Hercule Poirot. Of course I like Miss Marple as well and Detective Inspector Dermont Craddock. But I like clever Monsieur Hercule Poirot the most. Ever since I can remember I have loved the smell of books. In my teens I fell in love with Enid Blyton's Frederick Algernon Trotterville and Georgina. I roamed the Secret Island with Jack, Peggy, Mike and Nora, later joined by Barney. The works of Agatha Christie caught my fancy when I was 16. I have

read and re-read her books countless times. My room has so many of her treasures. My bro never disturbs me when I am reading, even when I keep the bedside light on till three in the morning.

My bro is very handsome. He always was. As a child I didn't see much of him since he studied at a boarding school. But ever since mum was killed in the car crash all those years ago he came to live with us. He used to say that he hated having to live in such close proximity with so many boys. They would tease him unmercifully and pull his hair. His studies suffered and he got more marks at school since he came to live with us. Dad didn't pay much attention to him. Dad was a changed man after mom died. In the mornings dad would make a bowl of porridge or corn-flakes for breakfast. My bro would eat from my bowl. Dad never objected. Sometimes bro would be naughty and spill some on the table but dad never seemed to mind. He seemed to be lost in his own world. I have seen him crying in front of mum's picture for years after her death. I guess he is mourning still. He never smiles or laughs.

I and my bro have always been very close. In fact it was he who found me a rare early edition of Murder of Roger Ackroyd. He put it on my table one

night and I was thrilled when I woke up in the morning. I rushed into the bathroom to thank him. He was taking a shower humming to himself. He laughed and dragged me under with him. He would often give me baths and oil massages. I came out to him when we were having a bath one day. “Bhaiyya!” I said, “I am a homo.” He did not blink an eyelid. “So do you masturbate thinking of men?”, he asked.

I said, “Yes, bhaiyya, I do”.

That was it. He never questioned me anymore about that. It brought us even closer to each other after that. He watches me masturbate every morning and night and passes me the hanky to clean up afterward. He is never shy of undressing in front of me. Why should he be? He is my bhaiyya after all. I have read of incestuous relationships but we are not into having sex with each other, we are just comfortable with each other’s nudity. Being in the bathroom together is an everyday occurrence for us. He is my best friend, is my bro. As I said, my bro is handsome and in college he used to get numerous letters from gushing female classmates. He enjoyed all the adulation and would tell me about their curvaceous assets and what he would do to them once he had

them in their bedrooms. We both knew that he would never avail of such opportunities. My bro is a master at fantasizing but truth be told, he is as decent as an angel. No wonder girls would fall for him by the droves. We would talk about how our fantasies were different – his strictly heterosexual and mine completely homosexual. We would discuss how I could get a guy to our bedroom when dad was at the shop. Finally, when I was 19 I managed to get one thin, bespectacled classmate of mine from the college. The first thing I did when I got him inside was to take off his spectacles. He wore thick milk bottle glasses and without them he was half blind. Which was just as well, since he couldn’t spot my bro standing in the semi dark behind the bathroom door he had kept ajar! Afterward we laughed about it, my brother and I. But sadly, I could not get that classmate for sex again. He started calling me “weird”. I wonder why. I tried to get him to talk to my bro but he refused. Silly boy! I am sure he would have liked my bro.

Next I got another guy, a married one this time, to bed one afternoon. A most hideous experience. He stank! And in the end he wanted money. I was terrified. I called out to my bro. Then it was his turn to be terrified. I have never

seen a man dress up so fast and leave. Haha! That was it. My bro has forbidden me to get guys home unless he has okayed them first. He is so protective of me! I was down with jaundice and typhoid when my brother was getting married. So I couldn't join the celebrations. I was sad that I could not be as free with my bro after his marriage. But he assured me that he would take his wife into confidence and be my best friend as always. Dear bro! Why do bad things happen to good people? His marriage was a disaster. He told me that his wife would not even let him fuck her on their bridal night. All she did was talk of was money and business. Sick bitch! Spoiled my brother's happiness. I would kill her if I could!

Since his divorce my bro and I talk late into the night about his future plans. Dad seems to be sliding further into depression. He has taken to drinking which is alarming. My bro takes care that I never get depressed. He screens my fuck buddies with a hawk eye. Ever my protective brother! I can see my father coming back to the shop. He is alone. It's about time, I think to myself.

I want to be out of this shop and go home. I unlock the door of our house. It's dark inside. "Why haven't you switched on the light?" I ask my brother. He doesn't reply. He sits on the rocking chair with a gentle smile on his face. We have hung a family portrait above the rocking chair. Funnily it has just dad, mom and me. But bro says that he didn't want to be photographed so they kept him out of the shot. I place my shoes on the shoe rack. It's just my shoes kept there. In fact I have never seen my brother's shoes! "Let me make some macaroni for us", I quip. He nods. I make it and pour it in a large bowl. There's just one spoon. We eat using the same spoon. Afterward I wash up. His side of the bed is always made. He never wrinkles it as he sleeps. His clothes on the hanger are always ironed. Funny, how I have never actually seen his clothes get dirty. I lie down on my side of the bed and put on the reading light. He never puts on his. In fact there is none on his side of the bed. As I said before, he never disturbs me when I am re-reading my favorite *Agatha Christie* – *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*.



Essay:

My letter to Oscar Wilde

Imtiaz Akhtar

When I first read Oscar Wilde I was still in my boarding school. I particularly remember to this day, the black and white picture of Wilde in my book. Wilde was wearing an overcoat, a long boot and with a book in his hands, staring at me with his beautiful eyes. It was his *Model Millionaire*, the famous short story that I had read. Hughie's failures were mine (ofcourse it was imagined), his tragedy of love became my tragedy. Such is the power of literature.

Reading literature then, as it is now was reading life itself. All great literature is the record of the writer's inner self. Reading them is like recounting the tales of one's own inner torment. Years later, when one day while strolling like a lazy dog through the overcrowded streets of central Calcutta I would as is my habit, pick up a book it was *Selected works of Oscar Wilde*. Being unemployed then, I took the task in all seriousness and read his works. Pages after pages I devoured to the insatiable Satan of books in me. What moved me most was the sheer sense of helplessness he felt, his solitary pain when faced with the collective foolishness of the English race. One thing in particular that I wish to talk about here is Wilde's homosexual relations which ultimately led to his trial and imprisonment for two years. If I may add as a footnote another thing - that he was married and had two

children. Wilde shared homosexual relations with number of young men, the most famous being with one Lord Alfred Douglas, a little know poet. As a student of law I wanted to get hold of his case in its entirety. I was lucky enough to get hold of his papers concerning his trial. (Queensberry v. Wilde) While reading the statements of trial given by Wilde in his defence, I was reminded of Howard Roark of *The Fountainhead* by Ayn Rand, the sheer fearlessness and the courage with which he defended his belief was befitting his stature both as a writer and as an individual almost obsessed with the philosophy of individualism. But the two years he spent at jail were devastating for him. One could read his essay *De Profundis* that he wrote while still at jail. The mood is of despair and repentance, of deep anguish. Here is a man of wit, the prince of paradoxes, (to use one of own phrase) crying in the solitude of his dark and dingy prison cell. Wilde here at least to me resembled his own fictive beggar (the millionaire model) from his famous short story by the same name. Such you see are the cruel jokes life plays with us.

By now the impatient reader must be asking a question: why is this anonymous man talking about a dead writer? Let me begin this way. Only today as I was returning to my home after having bought a book from a shop

in central Calcutta; I noticed vendors selling pirated editions of underwear, deodorants, books, shoes, jeans, neat white shirts meant ‘only’ for lawyers (as my father often jokes and tells me), in short almost everything one can imagine. An idea then struck me, that we as a society are almost obsessed with having things, even if it’s a poor edition of some expensive brand (here I don’t pretend never ever to have bought anything that is pirated). In a society almost obsessed with piracy, pirated cigarettes... pirated ideas... pirated human beings... originality becomes not merely a curse but even a felony. A seditious act. It is here that reading and arguing with his works could seriously help. Originality of beings is a theme that resurfaces in his works again and again, be it his plays, his novel or his essays. To quote Wilde, from his iconic work *The picture of Dorian Gray*, “What does it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and loses his soul”.

Dear readers, my unknown fellow beings, always remember that at the heart of every being there is a bud- if nurtured it blossoms into a beautiful white rose whose fragrance spreads across generations, times and climes. A great writer always stands in a symbolic relation to its own age. Wilde shared a troubled relationship with his own age. He was a free spirited lover badly trapped in a moralistic Victorian age.

What we all can certainly learn from him was the indefatigable spirit that never bowed before the shouts of the mob. I could sum up his attitude towards life with these lines written by my favourite Turkish poet Nazim Hikmet who wrote:

*“Living is no laughing matter
You must live with great seriousness
Like a squirrel.
for example--.”*

Another aspect that I find interesting was his commitment to socialism. Wilde certainly was not a party man, but his vision for the future was classless society. In his essay, *On socialism* he makes a rather subtle argument that even most socialists don’t understand, that it is only when human beings have been freed from the attachments of private property, that it shall find its final deliverance. Society then would reach higher and higher standards of prosperity. Although his vision has not been realized, but I hope that sooner or later, we will heed to his call. Socialism is not an entrapment that most like to believe it is. Rather it is a road to freedom.

My open letter to Oscar Wilde

My dearest Oscar,

I write this letter to you with the insane belief of being read by you.

I am one of your lover who carries you within himself. Perhaps it would not be any exaggeration if I say that I hold your works in as high esteem as I hold my own self, my own being. I first came across your works as an adolescence who himself was in love with a beautiful girl whose body was tender as a butterfly, whose eyes were dark as a secret and whose juicy lips was perhaps the fountain of all happiness that one can find on this earth. Then dear I was too young to understand the depth of your works. I now know that you are one of those who take words and convert them into diamonds. Out of your sentences arise a new road which if faithfully followed by our impatient people could lead us to a new city, a city where love is our lord and not misery and insanity. Just imagine a city full of lovers and flowers, a city of wine and wisdom, a city where the faithful turn to the dens of debauchery five times a day and on Fridays for an additional time, a city of eternal youth and eye blinding beauty, a city where the beds are the site of violent volcanic eruptions, a city where poets are honoured and not murdered, a city where every house harbours a Shelly or a Allama Iqbal, a city where even Jailors sit and compose epics every evening while the full moon is silently watching us, a city where every evening birds join together to sing a melodious song- was not this that you dreamed. I know this is what you

dreamt and I as your progeny am carrying that flame in my heart.

The world- you know, Oscar- has not changed much since your time. Ordinary bombs have been replaced by atomic bombs, sentries have been replaced by the never-sleeping-never-tiring security cameras, reading poetry has been replaced by eating newspapers. But there are few things that has not much changed, even now women are thoroughly beaten like animals by their husbands, boyfriends and relatives, even now same-sex love remains a crime, even now hypocrisy is considered a virtue by the society, even now poets are given the choice 'exile or death' for writing poetry, even now anybody who says that I believe in myself more than a honest priest believes in god is immediately tagged as insane, even now politicians are preferred over philosophers and quilt comforting lies over diamond hard truth, even now young children are taught the 'art' of making money at schools and universities and not the art of becoming human, simply human. Some sage once said that we have converted this beautiful world of ours into one big madhouse, a neurotic camp. Oscar, I write all this to you. For who else can understand all this better than you.

Imtiaz

Poetry:

Against the World

By Elancharan Gunasekaran

First day of college, what difference
would it be?
A kaleidoscope of faces
The stares of seniors I never did bother
Slicked hair, shined-shoed men ogled
Their gazes outlining my curves
Ignoring smirks and wolf-like whistles
I knocked on the door, entering on cue
In ragged jeans and rainbow-dyed top
The class erupted in covert whispers
Except for One
Her lusty eyes caught mine
My drugged soul was viciously reeled in
Inches from my face- a wink
Snapping into reality
Oh god...questions screamed
I crashed into the nearest desk
My neck craned spying from eye's side
Her wavy hair matched her toned
tanned body
My insides churned crazily
Locked on her smell it drove me wild
I needed to know
Years of hiding in the closet

I had to break free
I needed her
She wanted me
The emptiness in my heart no guy
could replace
Only a girl could steal
I will take what's mine

Days, weeks, time flew
Stares grew longer
The occasional graze of fingertips
Smiles turned into conversations
Hints drawing us closer
Passion forged deep desires
I could not wait any longer
Under the stars, we laid
On an isolated runway
Girl to girl, hidden feelings unveiled
Locking fingers
We embraced our calling
In a mad society
Love is ecstasy.



Two Poems

By Aser Peleg

Princess Lea's Four Oval Eyes

For David Lash

I learned that withholding is the epitome of modesty. It is one thing to say, "I dew" and not mean fare well, yet. Phylactery Advocacy is another thing entirely: casting vulgar deforestation from undisclosed, heavily fortified balm shelters. I may harbor effeminate mannerisms, such as windmill invocations, baton twirling, Pink Triangular Vandalism, but that does not make mi a Closeted Fascist. It is immodest to suspend Habeus Corpus. I am coveting her bathtub curtains.

Cigarra Chinita

"Pink is my signature color." ~ Steel Magnolias

The aroma of cigars is the Tsong of the Cicada, penetrating hearths of stone upon an altar of Stranger Firestarter, whose smoke rings dissolve into an exquisite spiral sequence.



Book Review:

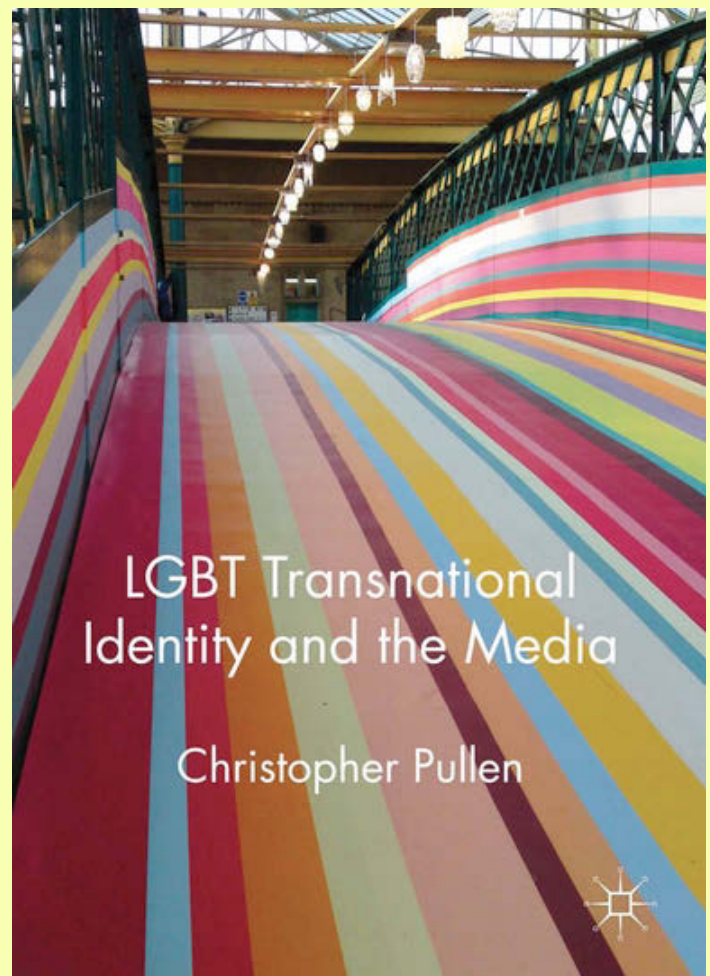
LGBT Transnational Identity and the Media

Edited by Christopher Pullen

Reviewed by Rohit K Dasgupta

This new collection of essays edited by Christopher Pullen makes a very timely intervention in the field of queer studies. Through critical examination of performances and representations within the media (television, film, new media), Pullen explores the transnational identity of LGBT people. There are eighteen interdisciplinary chapters exploring contexts such as politics and citizenship, adaptation and postcolonial transition and performance and subjectivity.

In the very beginning Pullen asserts that 'LGBT Transnational Identity is a theoretical idea, enabled not so much by a coming together and resolution of diverse histories of discount and disparity but offers a multifaceted scope, which is as much about individuals and personal agency, as collective groups and sustained coalescent action' (7). The connective strands of this anthology is the diversity and plurality of LGBT Identity(ies) that exists beyond geographic and cartographic boundaries and origins. It also dismantles the 'anglo centric and anglo-responsive' (8) frames of representation.



The first section of the book explores citizenship and political agency ranging from Pullen's own work within the documentary form, relating to issues of subjectivity to David Oscar Harvey's chapter on AIDS activism in sub Saharan

Africa, an area that has been much neglected within Queer scholarship. Margaret Cooper's chapter on the Argentinean same sex marriage on the other hand addresses the obstacles and cultural challenges faced by the movement followed by the factors that facilitated social change within this region. The chapter like most of the chapters in this book offers an entry point for contextualising these movements and observations offered by the authors in other geographical locations.

The second section includes three chapters on South Asia and South Asian queer subjectivity. Peri Bradley's chapter on British television looks at *Eastenders* and the reality show *Undercover Princes* to understand the impact of new postcolonial representations. The long running BBC show, *Eastenders* has been in the news recently for introducing a gay Muslim character which faced hostile reaction from the Muslim community, though the Queer South Asian community saw it as a very positive step towards sensitisation and lessening the homophobia that exists within the diasporic South Asian community in Britain. Both shows offered a wider recognition and social acceptance of queer representations of Islamic and non western ethnicities on British television. Bryce Renniger, Daniel Farr and Jennifer

Gauthier's chapters on Pratibha Parmar's *Khush* and *Happy Hookers* engages in a 'postcolonial critique of colonial sexualities' (182). Farr and Gauthier on the other hand see Parmar's film 'as an act of empowerment, not only for the subjects in the film but also for Parmar herself' (208).

The final section of the book explores the relation between the self and the other and explores this within a historiographical and social context.

Gustavo Subero in his chapter examines gay male pornography produced in Latin America and its transgressive potential , concluding that these films' allow issues of national and ethnic identity, as well as reformulations of the politics of the gay homoerotic to be read and visualised in them' (225). The other chapters by Cakirlikar and Ertin considers video art in the context of Turkey whilst the final chapter of the collection by Ka Hang explores queer desire in Chinese cinema. This book opens up a dialogue between representation and identity within a transnational context offering a challenge to the eurocentrism of LGBT identities by moving beyond a Western subjectivity and working towards 'becoming an LGBT citizen not defined by national borders' (17). I highly recommend this book for both academic scholars as well as those interested in queer issues.

i. An interesting and important piece is Andy Seale's 'Heteronormativity and HIV in Sub-Saharan Africa' *Development* (2009), 52: 84-90



PiNK

—pages

you

"A Photographic History of the Indian Gay Rights' movement"

It's Amazing to see that the revolution started in 1984 (that time when i wasn't even born).
Amazing collection.. Loved it. Thanks!

Abhijeet Yadav

~~~~~

*"Profiling the gay bitch"*

Bang on! I am sure not many would have taken kindly to this piece. And you know what, sometimes when you deal with these types, you start wondering if there is something wrong with you! Because, the community seems to be full of these.

*Vikas*

~~~~~

Great Stuff, reminds me of Quentin Crisp's account of the 'types' of gay men found clubbing. I suppose I would fit the "English Babu" since I detest Hindi movies for their lack of detail and overall disrespect for the viewer, but love their dance music.

Married men and blue collared... Who cares and yeah you're damn right about them sometimes being smoking hot.

Shankar



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